



The Role of the Police in Handling Conflicts Between Residents in Jakarta: The Perspective of Community Policing Theory and Semelser's Theory

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of the police in managing conflicts between residents in Jakarta through the lenses of Community Policing Theory (Polmas) and Smelser's Social Unrest Theory. Conflicts between residents in Jakarta, driven by various socio-economic, cultural, and personal factors, have increased social tensions, disrupting public order and community safety. The police's role in conflict resolution, incorporating law enforcement and community-based prevention approaches, is essential in maintaining social stability. The research explores the effectiveness of the Community Policing (Polmas) program, which fosters cooperation between the police and the community to prevent conflicts through dialogue, mediation, and active participation. The study also applies Smelser's Social Unrest Theory to analyze the structural and psychological factors contributing to social unrest, such as inequality and economic disparities. Through a qualitative, descriptive-analytical methodology, this study highlights the challenges and opportunities in implementing Polmas in Jakarta's complex urban context. The findings suggest that while the police's preventive actions are crucial, the active involvement of community members significantly enhances conflict resolution efforts. The study advocates for an integrated approach combining community-based strategies with insights from Smelser's theory to foster sustainable peace and social harmony in Jakarta.

Keywords: Community policing, social conflict, mediation, police, smelser's theory.

1. Introduction

Conflicts between residents are a common form of social conflict in Jakarta. These conflicts can be triggered by various factors, such as personal disputes, group tensions, or socio-economic issues. According to data from the Jakarta Metropolitan Police, the number of cases of conflicts between residents has shown a significant upward trend. This situation not only disrupts public order but also creates a sense of insecurity within the community (Eddy Guridno, 2022). This condition underscores the need for effective and strategic approaches to address conflicts and maintain social stability in a complex metropolitan area like Jakarta.

In addressing these conflicts, the police play a strategic role through both firm and fair law enforcement and a community-based prevention approach (Tamrin,

Jamrudin, Bidul, & Ashar, 2024). In terms of law enforcement, the police are tasked with ensuring that every legal violation is processed according to applicable procedures, thus upholding justice and deterring offenders. Meanwhile, through a prevention approach, the police act as facilitators of dialogue and mediation between conflicting parties, build harmonious relationships with the community, and identify potential conflicts early to prevent further escalation (Ramadan, 2021). The integration of these two approaches is expected to promote sustainable conflict resolution and foster social stability (Safrudin, 2024).

One of the primary strategies implemented to support conflict resolution is the Community Policing (Polmas) program. Polmas is a partnership-based approach that relies on a synergistic relationship between the police and the community as its foundation. Through this strategy, the police not only act as law enforcers but also as active partners in building public trust, listening to community aspirations, and involving residents in efforts to create a safe and conducive environment. This approach aims to increase active community participation in detecting and preventing potential conflicts within their own neighborhoods. However, the effectiveness of Polmas in the context of resident conflicts, particularly in metropolitan areas like Jakarta, requires further examination, given the social complexity, cultural diversity, and unique dynamics of urban life.

To analyze the dynamics of these social conflicts, this study employs Smelser's Theory as an analytical framework. This theory explains the conditions that influence the occurrence of conflicts, such as social structures and collective tensions (Ormrod, 2014). By integrating Polmas Theory and Smelser's Theory, this study aims to comprehensively examine the role of the police. This approach offers a new perspective on how community-based strategies can be effectively applied in complex local contexts.

Previous studies have often focused on general descriptions of police duties and functions, such as law enforcement, order management, and criminal case resolution. However, community-based approaches like Polmas frequently receive less in-depth attention. These studies typically address only surface-level aspects of how the police establish relationships with the community, without thoroughly exploring the mechanisms, challenges, and tangible impacts of implementing this approach. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by analyzing the effectiveness of Polmas in handling conflicts between residents in Jakarta, using the perspectives of Polmas Theory and Smelser's Theory. The findings of this study are expected to provide significant academic and practical contributions, both as additional scientific literature and as a strategic guide for the police to enhance the effectiveness of social conflict management.

2. Method

The research method employed in this study is qualitative with a descriptive-analytical approach, aiming to provide an in-depth depiction of the role of the police in handling conflicts between residents in Jakarta and analyzing it through the framework of Community Policing Theory (Polmas) and Neil Smelser's Social Unrest Theory. This study examines not only the law as written rules (law in the books) but also how the law is implemented and functions in social practice (law in action), as emphasized by Roscoe Pound (Nurhayati, Ifrani, & Said, 2021). This focus on the social context and legal practices offers a more factual understanding of the dynamics of conflict and the role of the police in conflict resolution within the community.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with police officers directly involved in conflict resolution and residents affected by the conflicts. Secondary data include official documents, police annual reports, and relevant literature reviews (David Tan, 2021; Sumarna & Dadang, 2023). Data analysis techniques involved data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. This research emphasizes the exploration of empirical facts that can be factually proven, avoiding exclusive reliance on statistical data and measurement tools, instead adopting a holistic approach to understanding social and legal phenomena (Sumarna & Dadang, 2023).

3. Results and Discussion

This study identified that the role of the police in handling conflicts between residents in Jakarta encompasses three main dimensions: preventive, curative, and rehabilitative. The preventive dimension involves proactive measures such as security patrols, mediation between community groups, and public education on the negative impacts of conflict. The curative dimension focuses on direct responses to conflict incidents through on-site presence, negotiation, and legal actions to prevent further escalation. Meanwhile, the rehabilitative dimension is oriented toward restoring social relations post-conflict through community-based approaches and the development of reconciliation programs (Pambudi & Redi, 2024).

From the data collected, the effectiveness of the police's role is significantly influenced by the level of community participation, the availability of resources, and the support of local community leaders. Active community involvement has a substantial impact on supporting the preventive efforts of the police. Conversely, low levels of community participation can hinder systematic conflict mitigation. Additionally, this study reveals several challenges, such as the complexity of conflicts between residents, limited personnel, and the lack of public understanding regarding the role of the police in conflict management.

These findings align with Community Policing Theory, which emphasizes the importance of collaboration between the police and the community to create a safe and harmonious environment. This perspective supports the notion that the success of the police in handling conflicts heavily depends on their ability to build trust and foster community participation (Pambudi & Redi, 2024). Furthermore, the findings also support Smelser's Social Unrest Theory, which highlights that social conflicts can be triggered by structural factors such as social inequality or institutional weaknesses. Therefore, preventive measures such as public education and community empowerment are essential to mitigating potential conflicts in the future.

3.1 Analysis of the Preventive Role of the Police

In the context of inter-community conflicts in Jakarta, the preventive role carried out by the police is a crucial aspect to prevent the escalation of conflicts. This preventive approach aims not only to reduce the potential for violence but also to foster a sense of security and trust within the community. Research findings reveal that the police in Jakarta actively strive to establish their presence in the community through various community-based activities.

Several concrete efforts have been implemented, including routine patrols in areas known to be conflict-prone. These patrols serve not only as a form of preventive law enforcement but also as a means to demonstrate the police's presence and concern for the safety of residents. Additionally, the police proactively conduct awareness programs about the dangers of social conflicts. Through this educational approach, the community is provided with an understanding of the negative impacts of conflicts and the importance of maintaining social harmony in their environment.

Furthermore, building intensive and ongoing communication with community leaders is one of the key strategies. By establishing partnerships with formal and informal leaders, such as heads of neighborhood associations (RT/RW), religious leaders, and traditional leaders, the police create effective communication channels to detect potential conflicts early and formulate joint solutions. This approach not only strengthens the relationship between the police and the community but also creates synergy in maintaining security stability. This communication strategy aligns with the principles of community policing, which emphasize the importance of collaboration between law enforcement officers and the community in fostering a safe and conducive environment (Shonholtz, 1987).

Mediation efforts conducted before conflicts occur have also proven to be effective in reducing tensions between community groups in several studied cases. Such preventive mediation plays a crucial role as an initial step to de-escalate emotions that often trigger larger conflicts (Qiu & Freel, 2020).

However, the effectiveness of the police's preventive role in preventing inter-community conflicts in Jakarta faces several significant challenges. One of the main obstacles is the low level of trust some communities have in the police. This distrust often stems from negative past experiences, such as allegations of abuse of power, injustice in law enforcement, or a lack of transparency in decision-making. As a result, collaboration between the police and the community in conflict prevention efforts becomes limited, thereby reducing the effectiveness of community-based approaches.

In addition, the limited personnel and resources available to the police also hinder their ability to cover all areas with potential conflicts. With a number of personnel disproportionate to the complexity and scope of the work area, the police often have to prioritize certain regions, leaving other areas with similar conflict potentials unattended. This lack of resources also affects the frequency of patrols, awareness programs, and mediation activities in the field, ultimately impacting overall conflict prevention efforts.

Social factors further complicate the situation, particularly with the presence of community groups with differing or even conflicting interests. These differences often trigger conflicts, while mediation and prevention processes become more challenging due to heightened tensions between groups. Power imbalances, cultural differences, and a lack of constructive dialogue further escalate the potential for conflicts.

Addressing these barriers requires a more holistic and innovative approach. The police need to adopt strategies to rebuild public trust through transparency, accountability, and more responsive services. Moreover, strengthening institutional capacity, both in terms of personnel and resource allocation, is essential to ensure that every potential conflict area is evenly covered. Community-based approaches must also be tailored to the social and cultural sensitivities of local communities, enabling more effective mediation and prevention efforts.

The success of the police's preventive role heavily depends on collaborative efforts that actively involve community participation. In this regard, the application of Community Policing principles, which emphasize the importance of partnerships between law enforcement officers and the community, is crucial. This aligns with the idea that conflict prevention relies not only on proactive actions by law enforcement but also on the establishment of solid relationships between the police and the community as the primary foundation for maintaining social stability (Karana, Surya Nita, 2024).

3.2 Analysis Based on Smelser's Theory

In understanding inter-resident conflicts in Jakarta, Neil Smelser's collective action theory provides a relevant analytical framework through six main conditions (Ormrod, 2014). First, social structure serves as an important background influencing the emergence of conflict (Garfield, 2021). Social stratification, economic disparities, and ethnic differences in several areas of Jakarta create conditions that foster social tension. This structural tension, as the second condition, is often triggered by issues such as uneven resource distribution, competition between groups, and other local issues that exacerbate relations between residents.

Second, shared beliefs play a crucial role in strengthening collective action. Narratives or perceptions that develop within society, such as assumptions of unfair treatment or the superiority of certain groups, often serve as psychological triggers for collective resistance actions. Third, triggering events, such as small incidents that escalate into major conflicts, become direct catalysts for the outbreak of conflicts between residents. This study found that events like misunderstandings between individuals or disputes in public spaces often serve as the initial spark for wider conflicts.

The fourth condition is the power of participation, where community leaders or influential groups play a role in encouraging or defusing conflict (Lewis, 1972). Some local figures use their influence to mediate and ease tensions, while in other cases, some worsen the situation for personal or group interests. Finally, social control by the Police is an important element in reducing the potential for conflict escalation. In this case, the presence of the Police at the scene and actions such as direct mediation and strict law enforcement play a significant role in controlling the situation.

Inter-community conflict in Jakarta is a complex phenomenon influenced by various structural, social, and psychological factors. Structural factors such as social stratification and economic disparities create imbalances that are the root cause of tension within society. Differences in access to education, employment, and public services deepen the social gap between groups, ultimately triggering conflict. This condition is often exacerbated by the dynamics of rapid urbanization in Jakarta, where population growth is not always matched by equitable development.

In addition to structural factors, social aspects such as interactions between diverse ethnic and cultural groups in Jakarta also influence the emergence of conflict. Diversity, which should be a strength, has the potential to become a source of tension if not managed properly. Such tension is often exacerbated by local issues, such as competition for public facilities or uneven distribution of resources. In many cases, conflict is triggered by negative sentiments that grow due to stereotypes or prejudices between groups.

Psychological aspects also play an important role in conflicts between residents. Shared beliefs or collective narratives that develop within society can influence how people perceive other groups. Perceptions of injustice, discrimination, or the superiority of certain groups are often strong psychological triggers for collective action. Such narratives, if not immediately corrected, can increase the potential for conflict and worsen social relations within society.

In addressing this conflict, community leaders and the Police play a strategic role. Community leaders, with their social influence, often act as bridges between warring groups. They not only play a role in easing tensions but also in rebuilding harmonious relationships through dialogue and mediation. On the other hand, the Police have a responsibility to maintain stability with a preventive approach and law enforcement. Their presence at conflict sites and firm and fair actions are key to controlling the situation.

The success of conflict management heavily relies on the synergy between preventive approaches, community collaboration, and effective law enforcement. Partnership-based approaches such as Community Policing (Polmas) have proven to be effective solutions. By involving the community directly, the Police can build trust and encourage active participation in maintaining security. However, this success requires support from various parties, including local governments, non-governmental organizations, and the community itself.

Therefore, understanding the factors influencing conflict and involving all stakeholders in resolution efforts is a critical step. With an adaptive and sustainable approach, Jakarta can build stronger social harmony amidst its diversity. The synergy between community leaders, the Police, and the general public not only helps prevent conflict but also creates an environment conducive to social and economic growth.

Field findings from this study confirm the relevance of Smelser's theory in understanding inter-community conflicts in Jakarta. Several dominant conditions, such as structural tensions and triggering events, are clearly visible in the conflict patterns analyzed. In the context of social control, the role of the Police aligns with Smelser's theoretical framework as a control mechanism aimed at preventing collective actions from turning into major riots. However, significant challenges exist, such as the lack of coordination between the Police and community leaders in some cases, which affects the effectiveness of social control (Ormrod, 2014).

With a Smelser-based approach, this analysis provides an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of social conflict in Jakarta. The results of this study emphasize the need for closer collaboration between the Police, community leaders, and other institutions to address structural tensions and reduce the potential for future conflict.

This reinforces the importance of Smelser's theoretical framework in designing conflict management strategies based on multidimensional analysis.

3.3 Consistency of Findings with Two Theoretical Perspectives

The Community Policing (Polmas) approach and Smelser's Theory each provide distinct perspectives in understanding and addressing the dynamics of inter-community conflict. Polmas emphasizes the importance of community-based collaboration, focusing on active partnerships between the police and communities to prevent conflicts before they arise. The main advantage of this approach lies in its practical and participatory nature, where communities are directly involved in efforts to create a safe and harmonious environment. This approach offers concrete solutions through activities such as joint patrols, community dialogues, and local-level mediation. Polmas also aims to increase community trust in the police, thereby fostering more harmonious relationships and facilitating conflict resolution.

Meanwhile, Smelser's Theory offers a more conceptual and structural analytical framework for understanding conflict. This theory identifies six determinants of collective action, such as structural conditions, social tensions, triggers, and mobilization, which together instigate conflict. The strength of this theory lies in its ability to provide in-depth insights into how various factors interact to create conditions that allow collective actions, including conflict, to occur. Thus, this theory helps to identify the root causes of conflict at a deeper level.

However, both approaches have limitations. Community policing, while effective in practice, often faces obstacles in its implementation, particularly when not supported by adequate resources, such as personnel, budgets, and infrastructure. The success of this approach also heavily depends on the level of community trust and participation, which can fluctuate based on social conditions and the history of police-community relations. When community participation is low or the police lack sufficient capacity, this approach tends to be less effective.

On the other hand, Smelser's Theory is more analytical and descriptive, which means it does not provide operational guidance for direct field application. Although this theory helps in understanding the structural dynamics behind conflict, it does not offer practical solutions for conflict prevention or management. In other words, this theory is better suited as a tool to understand the broader context, rather than as a direct strategy for addressing the issue.

An ideal approach to managing inter-community conflict combines practical strategies and theoretical insights. Community policing offers a direct and proactive method to engage communities, build trust, and address potential conflicts before

they escalate. By fostering collaboration between law enforcement and the public, this approach helps create a shared responsibility for maintaining peace and security.

At the same time, Smelser's Theory provides a strong analytical framework for understanding the underlying conditions that trigger conflict. By identifying structural strains, cultural narratives, and situational catalysts, this theory enables policymakers and practitioners to understand the root causes of unrest and develop tailored interventions. Such an understanding ensures that responses address not only the symptoms but also the underlying drivers of conflict.

Integrating these two approaches can lead to a more holistic strategy. Community policing can focus on relationship-building and reducing immediate tensions, while Smelser's Theory can guide the formulation of broader policies and interventions. This dual approach bridges the gap between action and analysis, ensuring that interventions are not only grounded in community realities but also informed by theoretical rigor.

The synergy between these methods can also aid in designing preventive measures. For instance, community policing initiatives might target specific stress points identified through the analytical lens of Smelser's Theory, such as areas with high economic inequality or frequent resource disputes. By aligning practical efforts with theoretical insights, interventions can be more precise and impactful.

Furthermore, this combination promotes sustainability. Community engagement lays the foundation for trust and cooperation, while theoretical analysis ensures adaptability to evolving conditions. Together, these approaches can provide dynamic and lasting solutions to inter-community conflict, accommodating the diverse and complex social landscapes of urban environments like Jakarta.

Ultimately, integrating community policing and Smelser's Theory can transform conflict management into a proactive, data-driven, and community-centered endeavor. This combination not only resolves immediate issues but also builds the capacity for long-term harmony and resilience in diverse societies.

4. Conclusion

The role of the police in handling conflicts between residents in Jakarta is critical, as it involves preventive, curative, and rehabilitative measures. The police engage in proactive steps such as security patrols, public education, and mediation, which aim to prevent conflicts from escalating. However, the effectiveness of these efforts is constrained by factors such as limited resources, personnel, and community distrust toward law enforcement. A key finding of this study is the essential role of community involvement in conflict prevention. Active participation from local leaders and the public significantly enhances the police's ability to prevent and

manage conflicts, as it fosters mutual trust and cooperation. This aligns with the principles of Community Policing, which emphasizes collaborative efforts to ensure security and harmony within communities.

In addressing the root causes of inter-community conflicts, Smelser's Social Unrest Theory offers a valuable framework for understanding the structural and psychological factors that contribute to tensions. The theory highlights how social inequality, economic disparities, and cultural narratives play a crucial role in triggering conflicts. The police's role in maintaining peace through preventive actions and law enforcement is vital in controlling such situations. However, to effectively manage these conflicts, the police must strengthen their coordination with community leaders and other stakeholders. This study recommends a more integrated approach, combining the practical, community-based strategies of Community Policing with the structural insights provided by Smelser's theory. This synergy can create sustainable conflict resolution practices and help maintain social stability in Jakarta's diverse urban environment.

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